

CARNEGIE INSTITUTION OF WASHINGTON,  
DEPARTMENT OF TERRESTRIAL MAGNETISM,  
ATOMIC PHYSICS OBSERVATORY  
5241 Broad Branch Drive, NW  
Washington, D.C.

HAER No. DC-52-C

HAER  
DC  
WASH,  
579C-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: 5241 Broad Branch Drive, NW  
Washington, D.C.

Date of Construction: 1938

Present Owner: Carnegie Institution of Washington

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Atomic Physics Observatory (APO) was completed in 1938 to improve the capability of measuring the earth's magnetic fields which was undertaken by the Carnegie Institution of Washington's Department of Terrestrial Magnetism, beginning in the early 1900s. The APO contained an electrostatic generator and tube that operated at electrical potentials of more than five million volts. (For more information see Carnegie Institute of Washington Year Book No. 37, July 1, 1937-June 30, 1938 [Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1938], 238-39 & 268-69.)

Historian: Gray Fitzsimons, 1988.

Project Information: This photographic project was initiated by the HAER Washington, D.C., office prior to the demolition of the Standardizing Magnetic Observatory. Jet Lowe took the large-format photographs and Gray Fitzsimons prepared the photo captions. HAER would like to thank Shaun J. Hardy, Librarian, Carnegie Institution of Washington, for providing information on the buildings associated with the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism.